

**Pigs raised outdoors with access to soil usually do not have an absolute requirement for iron supplementation but many producers still find it a beneficial practice even in these situations. This is especially the case in pigs raised in confinement without access to soil or feces**

## **Anaemia - Iron Deficiency**

## **From The Pig Site**

**(352) The piglet is born with limited supplies of iron and if it had been born in the wild would depend on supplementation to its diet from iron bearing soils. Indoors the pig has no access to iron other than to the sows' milk (which is deficient) until it starts to eat creep feed. It is necessary therefore to give extra iron either by mouth or by injection. The pig is born with a normal level of haemoglobin in the blood of 12-13g/100ml and this rapidly drops down to 6-7g by 10 to 14 days of age. A shortage of iron results in lowered levels of haemoglobin in the red cells, (anaemia), a lowered capacity for the carriage of oxygen around the body and an increased susceptibility to disease.**

## **Supplemental Iron**

## **From Extension**

Iron is necessary to prevent anemia in piglets. Iron deficiency anemia develops rapidly in nursing piglets because of low iron reserves in the newborn piglet, the low iron in sow's colostrum and milk, **the lack of contact with iron in the soil,** and the rapid growth rate of piglets. With no access to soil, iron deficiency anemia may result within 7-10 days after birth.

Iron can be administered either by injection or orally. Injection is preferred because iron given orally is not as well absorbed by piglets, thus reducing the quantity of iron that reaches critical tissues. Oral iron also may predispose some piglets to enteric disease (scour) problems, because iron is a necessary nutrient for the growth of microorganisms in the piglet's digestive tract. In addition, oral iron may not be absorbed in piglets with diarrhea.

Administer iron to piglets while they are one to three days old. Give piglets 200mg of iron either as one injection while they are one to three days old or in two-100 mg injections—one between one and three days of age and again at weaning. Injectable iron products are available in both the 100 and 200mg of iron/ml concentrations. *Read the label carefully to learn the iron concentration of the product you are using. Do not overdose, as too much iron can be toxic.*

### ***Does This Baby Need An Iron Shot?***

**NO HE DOESN'T!** Sometimes the iron shot can set off the diarrhea that we are trying to avoid. It is true that all baby pigs are born anemic and they do not get iron from the mother. There is a natural way to give this to them that is much safer and better for them.

Baby pigs born outside don't need iron as they get it from the dirt as they go along. If you supply a flat cookie sheet of clean dirt (dirt that has not had pigs on it) then he will walk through it and snuffle it and get his own iron from it. If it has tufts of grass in it, all the better as he will enjoy rooting them around the pan. The less you put into this baby that isn't necessary the better off he will be. No extras till he hits an age that is safe.

Every day that goes by gives him more of a chance of survival. So the idea is to keep him going as best you can until that time when you can switch him to solid pellets and heave a big sigh of relief.